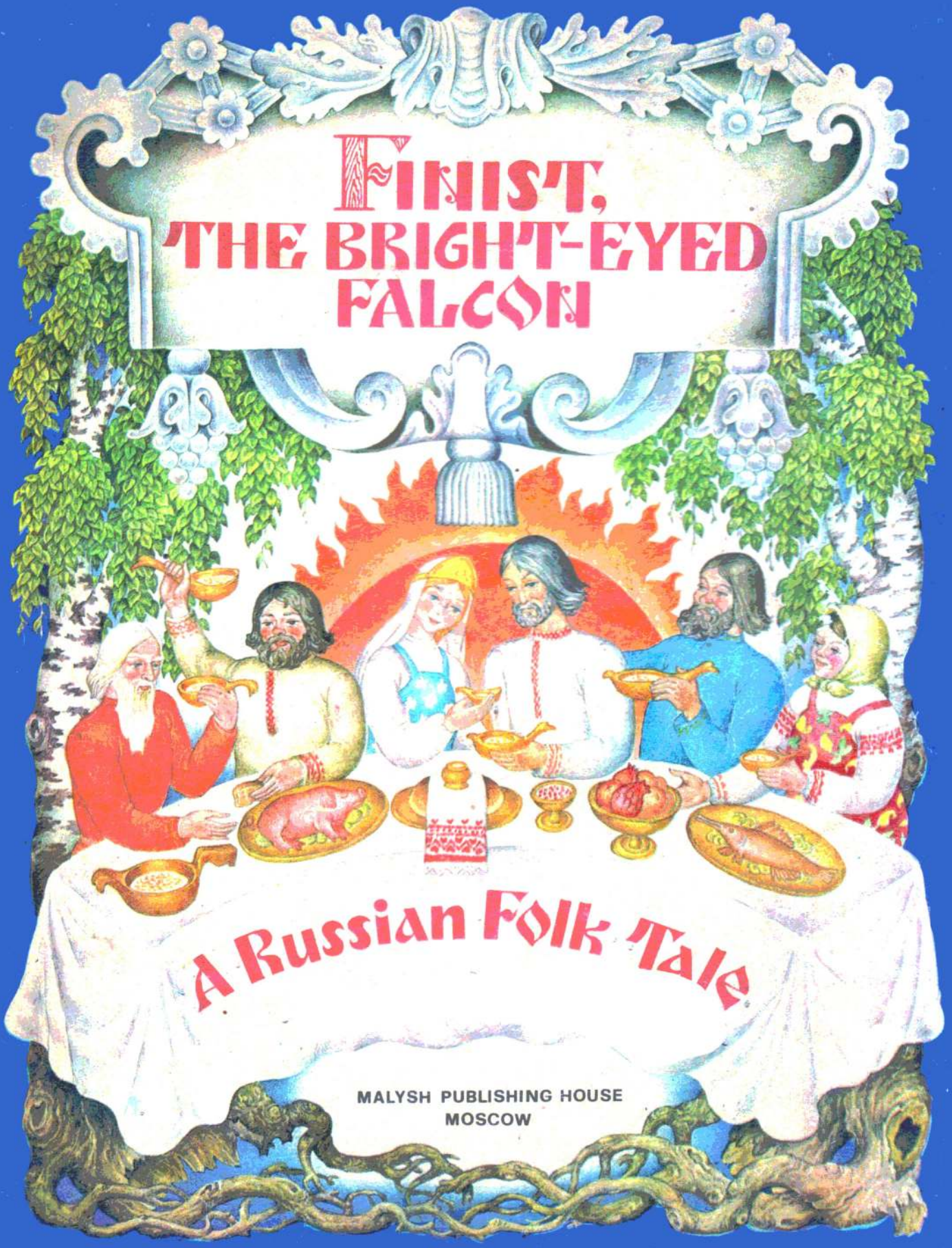
FINIST, THE BRIGHT-EYED FALCON



A Russian Folk Tale

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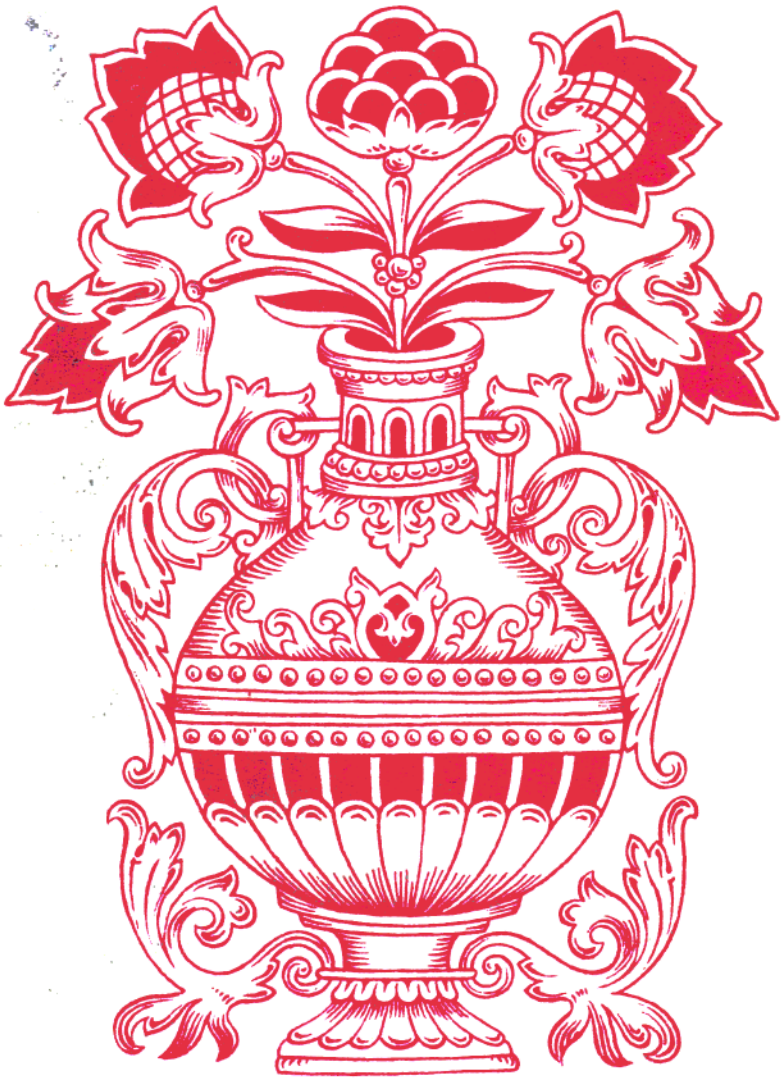


FINIST, THE BRIGHT-EYED FALCON

A Russian Folk Tale

MALYSH PUBLISHING HOUSE
MOSCOW

Drawings by Stanislav Kovalyov

Once upon a time there lived a peasant. His wife died and left him with three daughters. The old man wanted a maid to come in to help with the housework. But the youngest daughter, Maryushka, said,

"We do not need a maid, father. I shall run the house myself."

So that was agreed on. The youngest daughter Maryushka ran the household. She was able to do everything and anything she did she did well. The old man was very fond of her and happy that his daughter was growing up to be so clever and a hard-working girl. Besides, Maryushka was as pretty as a picture. Her sisters, who were jealous and mean, were not at all pretty, but they were ever so fashionable. The whole day long they sat primping, painting and powdering themselves. Besides, they were always trying on some new finery, a dress, or boots, or if not boots, then a head-piece.

One day the father was going to market and asked his daughters,

"Well, my lasses, what shall I buy for you to make your eyes light up?"

The older daughters said,

"Buy each of us a shawl, but with great big flowers embroidered in gold."

But Maryushka just stood there and did not say a word.

"And what shall I buy for my little girl?" her father asked.

"Father, buy me one of the feathers of Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon."

When their father returned he brought shawls for the two older girls, but he had not come across the kind of feather Maryushka wanted.

Then again the father was going to market and he said,

"Well, my daughters, order what ever you want me to buy."

The older girls were very happy.

"Buy us some high boots with silver buckles."

But Maryushka again said,

"Buy me a feather of Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon."

The girls' father spent the whole day at the market. He bought the high boots, but the feather he could not find. So he returned with no feather.

Then the day came when the old man went to market for the third time. The older girls said,

"You buy us frocks."

But Maryushka again said,

"Father, buy me a feather of Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon."

Though the father searched the whole day long, such a feather he could not find. When he had left the town he met a very old man.

"Good day to you, granddad."

"Good day, my dear fellow! Where may you be off to?"

"Back home, granddad, to my village. But it troubles me that my youngest daughter asked me to buy her a feather of Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon, but not one could I find."

"I have one of those feathers, but it is a very special one. However, I don't mind giving it to a good man."

The old man took out the feather and presented it to the peasant. It looked like any ordinary feather. He drove on asking himself, "I wonder what Maryushka could find so special in it?"

The old man gave his daughters their presents. The older girls dressed up in their fine frocks and teased Maryushka,

"Stupid you were and stupid you always will be. Go on, stick you feather in your hair and look lovely!"

Without a word Maryushka walked off and, when everybody was asleep, she dropped the feather on the floor and whispered,

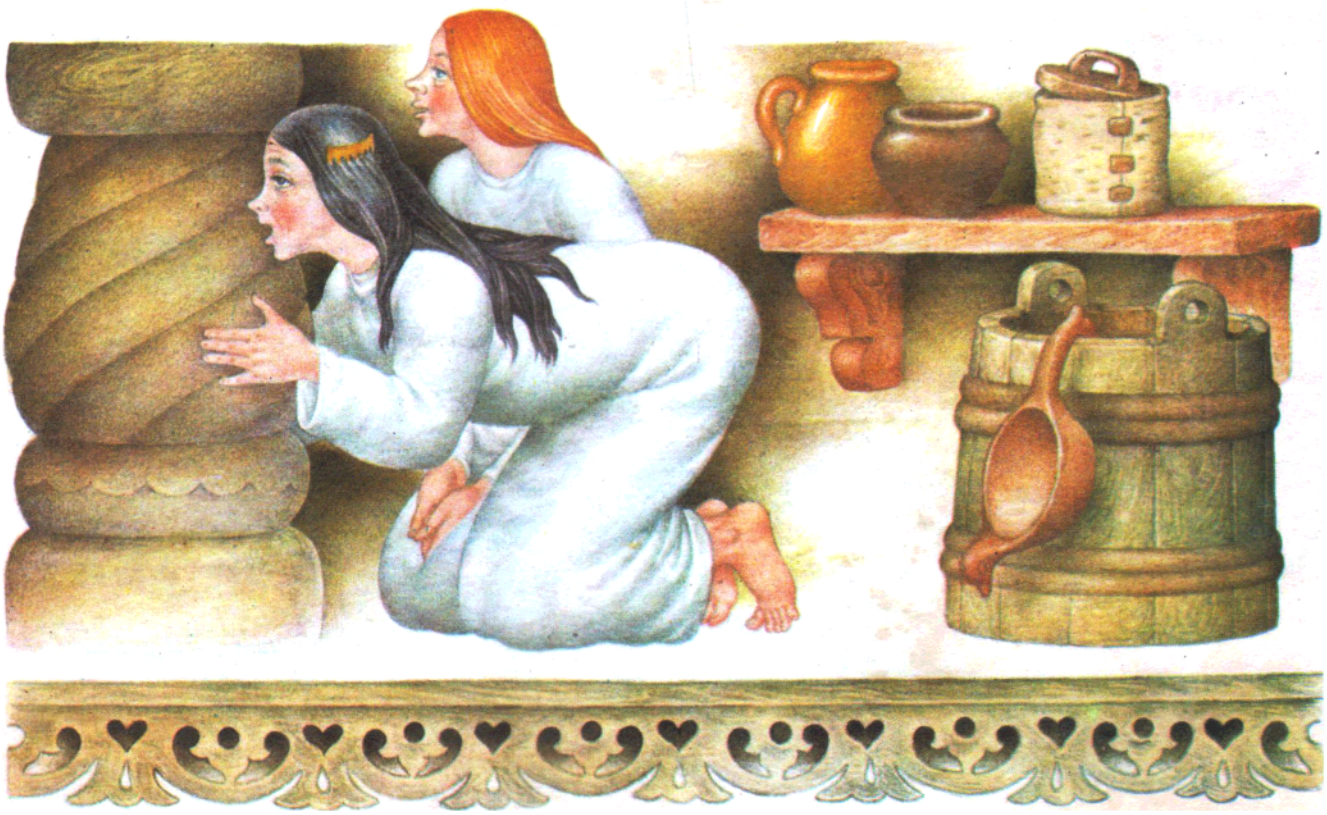
"Dear Finist, Bright-Eyed Falcon, come to me, my beloved bridegroom!"

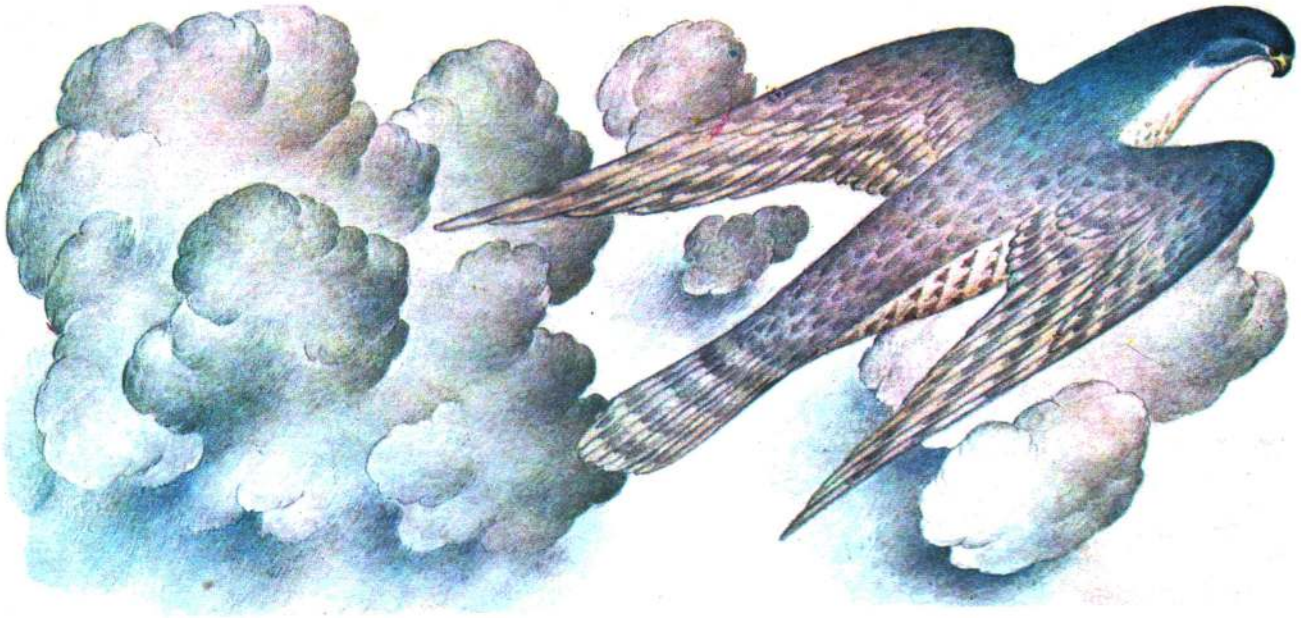
Then there appeared a fine young man, so handsome no words can describe. Towards the morning the young man stamped on the floor and turned into a falcon. Maryushka opened the window for him and away flew the falcon up into the blue sky.

Three times Maryushka called upon the young man to appear to her. When morning came he turned into a falcon and soared off into the high blue heavens. At night he would fly back to Maryushka and again become a fine young man.

On the fourth day Maryushka's mean sisters noticed what was happening and told their father about it.

"My dear daughters," he replied, "the best thing you can do is to keep a sharp eye on yourselves!"





"Very well," thought the sisters, "we shall see what happens next."

They fixed sharp knives into the window frame. Then they hid and watched. At last they saw the falcon. He flew up to the window, but he could not get into Maryushka's room. He tried and tried until the knives had cut deep into his breast, but Maryushka was fast asleep and did not know what was happening. Then the falcon said,

"Let her who needs me find me. But it will not be easy. You will find me only when you have worn through three pairs of shoes made of iron, when you have broken three staffs of iron and when you have worn out three caps of iron."

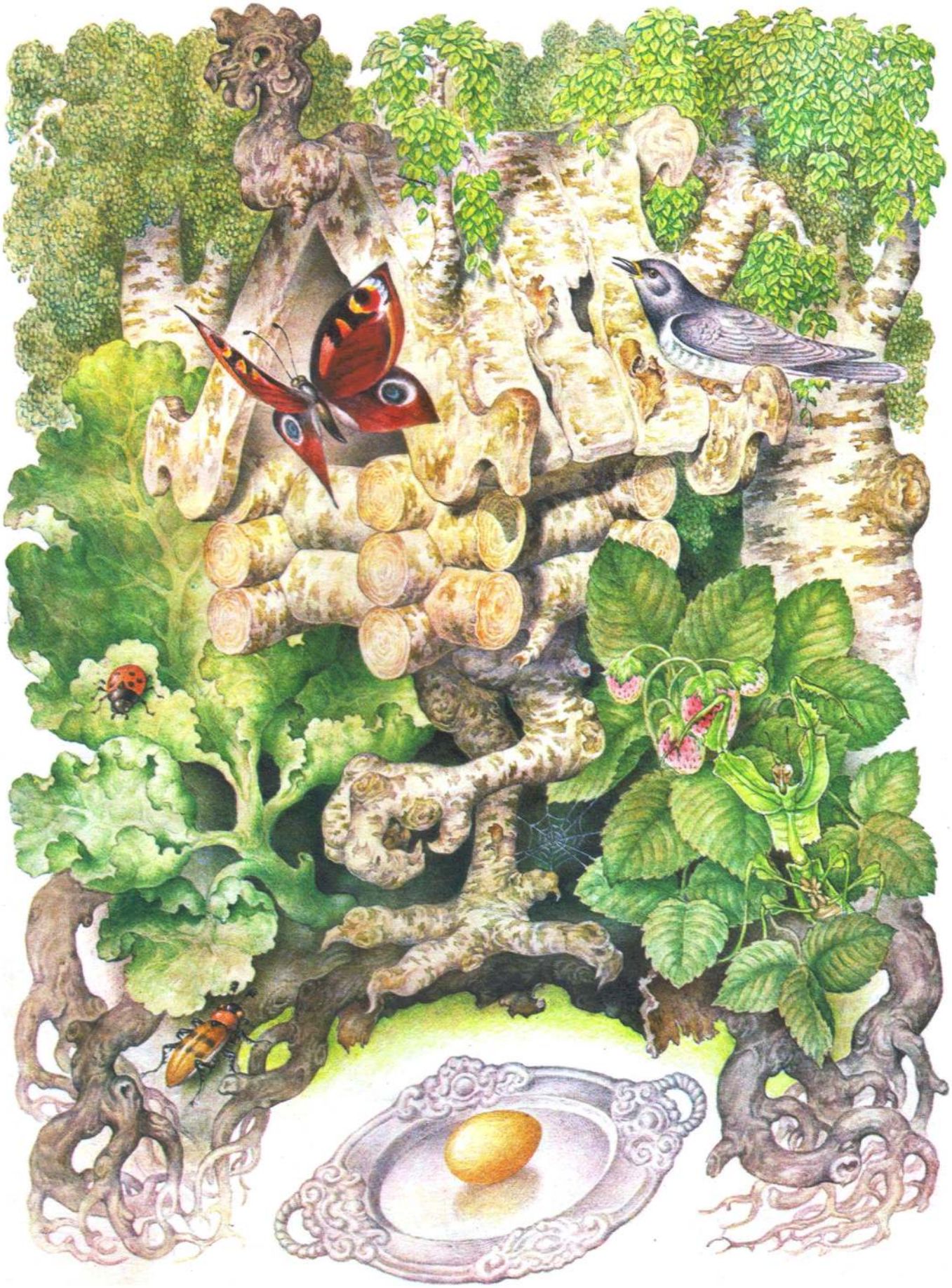
Maryushka heard that and jumped out of bed. She looked out of the window, but her falcon was nowhere to be seen. Only traces of blood were left on the window-sill. Maryushka wept bitterly. She washed away the blood with her tears, and when she had done that she looked more beautiful than ever.

She went to her father and said,

"Do not scold me, father, but let me go on a long, long journey. If I live, we shall meet again. If I die, then you will know that such was my fate."

The father was very sorry to see his favourite daughter leave, but he gave her his blessing.

Maryushka had three pairs of iron shoes made for her,



tnree iron staffs and three iron caps. Then she started out on her long, long journey to seek out her beloved Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon. She walked through the wide, open fields. She passed through dark forests and over high mountains. Merry birdsong warmed her heart. The waters of brooks washed her white face. The dark forests gave her shelter. Nothing could harm Maryushka. The grey wolves, the brown bears and the foxes, all the beasts ran up to her. She wore through a pair of iron shoes, she broke an iron staff and wore out an iron cap.

One day, on reaching a meadow, Maryushka saw a log cabin standing there on hen's legs. It turned round and round. Maryushka said,

"Log cabin, log cabin, stand still with your back to the woods and your front towards me! I want to come in. I want to eat and take a seat."

The cabin stopped turning, with its back towards the forest, and stood facing Maryushka. She went into the log cabin and saw the old witch Baba-Yagá sprawling there with her feet in opposite corners of the room, her lips draped over a beam and her nose grown into the ceiling.

Baba-Yagá saw Maryushka and snorted,

"Phew, phew! I smell the blood of a Russian in you! Fair maiden, are you up to something, or fleeing from something?"

"I am seeking, grandmother, seeking Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon."

"Ah, my beauty, it will take you a long time! Your fine falcon is far, far away in a kingdom beyond the hills, beyond the dales. The Soceress Queen has given him a love-potion and married him. Here, take this silver platter and golden egg. When you come to that kingdom on far you must go to serve the Queen as a maid. When you finish your work take the platter, put the golden egg on it and it will start rolling around the dish. She will offer to buy it, but do not sell it. Ask to see Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon."

Maryushka thanked the witch and left. The forest grew dark. Maryushka was so frightened she could not take a step. Towards her came a cat. It sprang up to her and purred,

"Don't be afraid, Maryushka. Always walk ahead. It will be even more frightening, but you must keep on and never look back."

The cat rubbed its back on Maryushka's legs and disappeared. The girl walked on through the woods which were getting ever darker.

Maryushka walked on and on. She wore through a pair of iron shoes, broke an iron staff and wore out an iron cap. Then she came to another log cabin on hen's legs. Around it was a wattle fence. On each of its stakes there was a skull and in each skull a light burnt. Maryushka said,

"Log cabin, log cabin, stand with your back to the woods and your front towards me! I want to come in. I want to eat and take a seat."

The log cabin turned its back towards the forest and stood facing Maryushka. She went into the log cabin and saw another old witch Baba-Yagá sprawling with her feet in opposite corners of the room, her lips draped over a beam and her nose grown into the ceiling.

The Baba-Yagá saw Maryushka and snorted,

"Phew, phew! I smell the blood of a Russian in you! Fair maiden, are you up to something, or fleeing from something?"

"I am seeking, grandmother, seeking Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon."

"Did you visit my sister?"

"Yes, I did, grandmother."

"All right, my beauty, I shall help you. Take this embroidery frame and this golden needle. The needle will embroider by itself crimson velvet with silver and gold thread. The Queen will try to buy these things, but do not sell them. Ask to see Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon."

Maryushka thanked Baba-Yagá and left. The forest was filled with banging, booming and whistling, and was lit up by the skulls. Maryushka was very frightened. Suddenly a dog ran up.

"Bow, wow, wow! Don't be frightened, my little dear. Just go ahead. It will be even more frightening, but keep on, never look back." Saying this the dog disappeared.

Maryushka walked on, and the wood got darker and darker. Branches scratched her legs and caught at her sleeves.... But she walked on and on and never looked back.

Who knows how long Maryushka walked? She wore through the third pair of iron shoes, she broke the third iron staff and wore out the third iron cap. She came out onto a clearing. On the clearing stood yet another log cabin on hen's legs. Round it there was a wattle fence. On each of its stakes there was a horse's skull. In each skull a light burnt. Maryushka said,

"Log cabin, log cabin, stand with your back to the woods and your front towards me!"

The log cabin turned its back towards the forest and stood facing Maryushka. She went in and saw another old witch Baba-Yagá sprawling with her feet in opposite corners, her lips draped over a beam and her nose grown into the ceiling. She was very dark and one fang stuck out of her mouth.

She saw Maryushka and snorted,

"Phew, phew! I smell the blood of a Russian in you! Fair maiden, are you up to something, or fleeing from something?"

"I am seeking, grandmother, seeking Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon."

"It will be difficult for you to find him, my beauty, but I

shall help you. Take this silver carding board and this golden hand-spindle. It will spin by itself when you pick it up. The thread it spins will be of pure gold."

"Thank you, grandmother."

"Save your breath to cool you porridge and listen to what I tell you—the Queen will try to buy the golden spindle, but do not sell it. Ask to see Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon."

Maryushka thanked Baba-Yagá and left. The forest hummed, buzzed and whistled. Owls whirled overhead. Mice crept out of their holes and all ran towards Maryushka. Then she saw that a grey wolf was loping towards her.

"Don't grieve, Maryushka," said the wolf, "you just climb onto me and don't look back."

Maryushka climbed up onto the grey wolf and away they went. Ahead lay wide plains, velvety meadows, rivers of milk and honey and mountains that reached up to the clouds. But Maryushka rode on and on. Then in front of her Maryushka saw a crystal palace. There was fret-work round the window-frames. The Queen was looking out of the window.

"Well," said the wolf, "get down now, Maryushka. Enter

the Queen's service as a maid."

Maryushka dismounted and took her bundle. She thanked the wolf and walked up to the crystal palace. She bowed to the Queen and said,

"I do not know how to address you. I do not know your titles. But tell me, do you need a maid?"

The Queen replied,

"I have been looking for a serving girl for a long time. Only she must be able to spin and weave and embroider."

"I can do all that."

"Very well, come in and get down to work."

So Maryushka entered the Queen's service. She worked all day and when night fell she took the silver platter and the golden egg and said,

"Golden egg, run around my silver platter and show me the one I love."

The golden egg ran around the silver platter and in it Maryushka saw Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon. She looked at him with tears in her eyes and said,

"Finist, my Finist, Bright-Eyed Falcon, why did you leave me all alone to cry so bitterly for you?"

The Queen overheard Maryushka and said, "Sell me your golden egg, Maryushka, and your silver platter."

"No", answered Maryushka, "they are not for sale. I can give them to you if you let me see Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon."

The Queen thought this over and finally said,

"All right. So be it. Tonight, when he goes to sleep, I shall show him to you."

When night fell Maryushka went to the bedroom of Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon. She saw that her dear one was so fast asleep she could not wake him.

Maryushka gazed at her darling and could not take her eyes off him. She kissed his honey-sweet lips and pressed herself close to his white breast, but her heart's delight slept on and did not awake.

The dawn came and Maryushka had not managed to rouse her dear one...

Maryushka worked all day long and in the evening she picked up her silver embroidery frame and her golden needle.

As she was sitting there, and the golden needle sewed all by itself, she said,

"Sew, sew, make beautiful embroidery for Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon. Embroider a towel that he may use in the morning."

The Queen overheard her and said,

"Maryushka, sell me your silver embroidery frame and your golden needle."

"I shall not sell them," answered Maryushka, "but I shall give them to you if only you let me meet Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon."

The Queen thought and thought and finally said,

"All right. So be it. You may come in the night."

Night fell. Maryushka entered the bedroom of Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon, but he was in such a deep sleep she could not arouse him.

"Finist, my Bright-Eyed Falcon, wake up!"

Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon slept on. Maryushka shook him, but could not wake him.

At the break of day Maryushka went back to work. She took up her silver carding board and golden spindle. The Queen cried,

"Sell them to me, sell them!"

"Sell them I shall not, but I can give them to you if you let me spend just one hour with Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon."

"All right!" answered the Queen, but she said to herself, "Anyway you won't wake him up."

When night fell Maryushka entered the bedroom where Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon was wrapped in deep sleep.

"Finist, Bright-Eyed Falcon of mine, wake up, arise!"

Finist slept on.

No matter how hard she tried, Maryushka could not wake him and dawn was near.

Maryushka wept bitter tears.

"Darling Finist," she sobbed, "Bright-Eyed Falcon of mine, do wake up. Gaze on your Maryushka and hold her to your heart!"

A tear fell on the uncovered shoulder of Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon. It was so hot it scalded him. Finist, the

Bright-Eyed Falcon awoke and saw Maryushka. He held her tight and kissed her.

"Can it really be you, Maryushka? Have you worn through three pairs of iron shoes? Have you broken three iron staffs? Have you worn out three iron caps and found me at last? Now let us return to our homeland."

They were about to set off for home when the Queen saw them and ordered the trumpets to be sounded to let everybody know about the treachery of her husband.

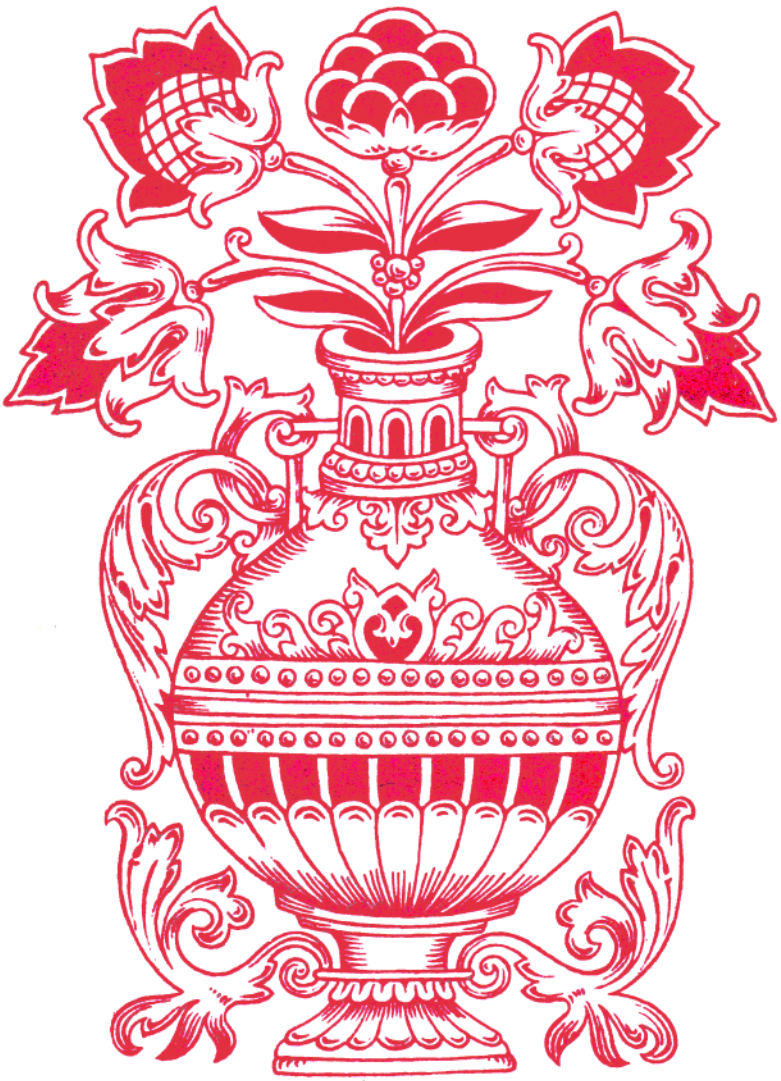
The lords and the merchants gathered to decide how Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon should be punished.

Then Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon said,

"Who, do you think, is my real wife, the one who loves deeply, or the one who buys, sells and deceives?"

Everybody agreed that the wife of Finist, the Bright-Eyed Falcon was Maryushka.

They lived happily ever after. When they reached their own country there was great rejoicing. The trumpeters trumpeted and the cannon roared. There was such a great feast that people remember it until this very day.



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